

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 211145Z NOV 75
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2367
INFO AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 15543

EXDIS/NOFORN

EO 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJ: ACTIVITIES OF OPPOSITION LEADER GEORGE FERNANDES

1. FRG LABOR ATTACHE MANFRED TURLACH MET OPPOSITION LEADER GEORGE FERNANDES ON OR ABOUT NOV 1 IN NEW DELHI. FERNANDES, PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND LABOR LEADER, IS PROBABLY THE MOST SOUGHT AFTER MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITION, AND THERE IS A WARRANT OUT FOR HIS ARREST. HE HAS BEEN UNDERGROUND SINCE THE JUNE 26 DECLARATION OF THE EMERGENCY. THE FOLLOWING IS TURLACH'S ACCOUNT OF THE MEETING.

2. FERNANDES IS MOVING ABOUT WITH A GREAT DEAL OF SECRECY. THE MEETING WITH TURLACH WAS AT FERNANDES' REQUEST AND WAS SET UP BY AN INTERMEDIARY WHO TURLACH SAID WOULD NOT NORMALLY BE IDENTIFIED WITH OPPOSITION ACTIVITIES OR ASSOCIATED WITH FERNANDES, AS HE IS A FORMER MANAGEMENT OFFICIAL. ACCORDING TO FERNANDES, THERE ARE ABOUT 300 PERSONS WORKING WITH HIM ENGAGED IN SABOTAGE ACTIVITIES. MANY WERE SAID TO BE TRAINED IN THE USE OF EXPLOSIVES. FERNANDES CLAIMED TO HAVE ALREADY BLOWN UP TWO RAILWAY BRIDGES IN THE SOUTH AND A BRIDGE BETWEEN BOMBAY AND POONA. THE GROUP ALSO CLAIMS RESPONSIBILITY FOR SETTING FIRES IN THE BOMBAY DOCKS.

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3. FERNANDES SAID THE NAXALITIES WERE RESPONSIBLE

FOR THE FIRE IN THE LIC BUILDING IN MADRAS LAST JULY. HE CLAIMED THAT THE NAXALITES AND OTHER OPPOSITION GROUPS INCLUDING HIS OWN WERE NOW WORKING TOGETHER. IN ADDITION, THERE HAS BEEN A REVIVAL OF GROUPS SUCH AS THE INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY (INA) WHICH ENGAGED IN VIOLENT ACTIVITIES PRIOR TO INDEPENDENCE.

4. FERNANDES APPEALED TO TURLACH FOR FRG FINANCIAL SUPPORT. TURLACH REPLIED THAT HE DISAPPROVED OF FERNANDES' STRATEGY OF VIOLENCE. FERNANDES TOLD TURLACH THAT HE WAS EVEN NOW PREPARED TO ACCEPT MONEY FROM THE CIA AND ASKED TURLACH IF HE COULD SUGGEST CIA CONTACTS. TURLACH SAID THAT HE KNEW OF NONE. (COMMENT: ON NOV 8 A "MISS GITA" CALLED ON THE LABOR COUNSELOR SEEKING A MEETING FOR FERNANDES WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND THE COUNSELOR. SHE WAS TOLD THAT THERE WAS ABSOLUTELY NO POSSIBILITY FOR A MEETING.)

5. TURLACH, WHO HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A NUMBER OF OPPOSITION FIGURES, SOME OF WHOM ARE OPERATING ABOVE GROUND, BELIEVES THAT BY DECLARING THE EMERGENCY MRS GANDHI HAS UNLEASHED FORCES GREATER THAN SHE HAD ANTICIPATED. HE BELIEVES THAT SHE WILL BE OBLIGED TO MAINTAIN THE EMERGENCY TO DEAL WITH THEM. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN MORE SUCCESSFUL IN INTERCEPTION OPPOSITION TRACTS, NOTING THAT OF THE FOUR COPIES OF FERNANDES' MATERIAL USUALLY SENT TO HIM UNDER DIFFERENT NAMES, HE HAS BEEN RECEIVING ONLY ONE.

6. COMMENT: ON SEPTEMBER 24 THERE WAS A FIRE IN A LARGE BOMBAY DOCK WAREHOUSE, WHICH WAS FOLLOWED BY THREE SMALLER FIRES IN THE SAME WAREHOUSE. THERE ARE NO INDICATIONS THAT ANY OF THESE WAS CAUSED BY SABOTAGE NOR HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN ANY EVIDENCE INDICATING THAT THE ALLEGED ACTS OF SABOTAGE (PARA 2) ACTUALLY TOOK PLACE. WE HAVE, HOWEVER, AVOIDED ANY PROBING WHICH COULD AROUSE GOI SUSPICIONS OF USG INVOLVEMENT.

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Message Attributes

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